

**Italian Language Maintenance in Sydney:  
New Perspectives for the Fourth Generation?**

Manuela Di Giovanni

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### **Certificate of Original Authorship**

I, Manuela Di Giovanni, declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Education School, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all the information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution. This research is supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program.

Signature: Manuela Di Giovanni

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Signature removed prior to publication.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

<b>ACARA:</b>	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
<b>CESE:</b>	Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation
<b>CELI:</b>	Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana (Certificate of Knowledge of Italian Language)
<b>Co.As.It.:</b>	Italian Association of Assistance
<b>CARLA:</b>	Centre for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition
<b>DET:</b>	Department of Education and Training
<b>ELTF:</b>	Endeavour Language Program
<b>EU:</b>	European Union
<b>EV:</b>	Ethnolinguistic Vitality
<b>FIFA:</b>	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
<b>HL:</b>	Heritage Language
<b>HSC:</b>	High School Certificate
<b>IBS:</b>	Italian Bilingual School
<b>IM:</b>	Immigrant Minority
<b>L1:</b>	Language 1 (First Language)
<b>L2:</b>	Language 2 (Second Language)
<b>L3:</b>	Language 3 (Third Language)
<b>LOTE:</b>	Languages Other Than English
<b>MTE:</b>	Mother Tongue Education
<b>NESA:</b>	NSW Education Standards Authority
<b>OOSH:</b>	Out of School Hours
<b>PELO:</b>	Programme d'Enseignement de Langues d'Origines
<b>RG:</b>	Reference Group
<b>RM:</b>	Regional Minority
<b>SLA:</b>	Second Language Acquisition
<b>SS:</b>	Student Survey
<b>VSL:</b>	Victorian School of Languages

## Table of Contents

<b>Chapter One – Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction .....	1
1.2 Generations of migrants in Australia .....	3
1.3 Background to the study .....	4
1.4 The importance of language maintenance .....	5
1.4.1 Defining the terms – Heritage and Community Language .....	8
1.5 Research aims .....	8
1.6 Research questions .....	9
<b>Chapter Two – Literature Review .....</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	10
2.2 The Italian migration to Australia .....	10
2.2.1 Factors of language shift and language maintenance .....	11
2.3 Linguistic complexity of the Italian language in Australia .....	13
2.4 The intergenerational shift: census analysis .....	15
2.5 How scholarly research accounted for the loss .....	16
2.5.1 Intergenerational transmission of Italian dialects in Australia .....	19
2.5.2 The research gap: what is happening in the third generation of Italo-Australians? .....	21
2.5.3 Who are the third generation Italians? .....	22
2.5.4 The new migration .....	23
2.5.5 New purposes and affordances of Italian language maintenance .....	25
2.5.6 Language revival? .....	27
2.5.7 Contemporary language ecology of Italo-Australians .....	28
2.5.8 Ethnolinguistic group vitality .....	29
2.5.9 Language and Identity: the role of belonging in identity formation .....	32
2.5.10 Society, culture and communities of practice as catalysts of language maintenance .....	35
2.5.11 Motivation in L2 acquisition: identification and desire .....	36
2.5.12 The role of family: gendering in language maintenance .....	38
2.5.13 The educational sector concern for Italian language maintenance in Australia .....	38
2.5.14 Opportunities for primary and secondary school students to learn Italian .....	41
2.5.15 The educational offerings in other Australian states and abroad .....	41
2.6 Summary of chapter .....	45
<b>Chapter Three – Research Design and Methodology .....</b>	<b>46</b>
3.1 Introduction .....	46
3.2 Conceptual framework .....	48
3.2.1 Identity .....	49
3.2.2 Communities of practice .....	53
3.3 Research approach .....	57
3.3.1 Paradigmatic perspective .....	57
3.3.1.1 Case study with an ethnographic approach .....	58
3.3.1.2 Ethnographic approach .....	63
3.4 Research design .....	69
3.4.1 Context .....	69
3.4.2 Research components .....	70
3.4.3 Sampling of participants .....	72

3.4.4 Profile of participants .....	73
3.4.4.1 Profile of reference group informants.....	74
3.4.4.2 Profile of students .....	74
3.4.4.3 Profile of families .....	76
3.5 Data collection methods .....	76
3.5.1 Reference groups.....	77
3.5.2 Survey .....	78
3.5.3 Interviews.....	79
3.5.4 Observations.....	80
3.6 Data analysis .....	81
3.7 How the research methods made it possible to answer the questions.....	85
3.8 Ethical considerations .....	86
3.9 Summary of chapter .....	87
<b>Chapter Four – Findings .....</b>	<b>88</b>
4.1 Introduction .....	88
4.2 Rationale for including a reference group.....	90
4.3 Migrants’ generations.....	93
4.4 Italian language maintenance .....	94
4.5 Contemporary affordances and hindrances of Italian language maintenance.....	95
4.6 Dialect use.....	97
4.7 Importance of Italian language maintenance .....	99
4.8 Domains of language use .....	100
4.9 Intergenerational language transmission.....	102
4.10 Educational sector role to promote Italian language maintenance.....	103
4.11 Identity and language reclaim .....	109
4.12 Summary of chapter .....	110
<b>Chapter Five – Findings from Survey and Interviews with Tertiary Students .....</b>	<b>112</b>
5.1 Introduction .....	112
5.2 Tertiary students survey .....	112
5.2.1 Survey students’ linguistic background .....	114
5.2.2 Dialects.....	116
5.2.3 Importance of learning the Heritage Language.....	117
5.2.4 Domains of language use .....	119
5.2.5 Implications of globalisation and technology .....	120
5.2.6 Language and cultural values transmission.....	121
5.2.7 Effectiveness of social networks .....	124
5.2.8 Identity .....	124
5.3 Student interviews.....	127
5.3.1 Interviewed students’ profile.....	127
5.3.2 Home language use .....	128
5.3.3 Dialect .....	131
5.3.4 Transmission of language and cultural values .....	132
5.3.5 Role of the educational sector in language maintenance .....	134
5.3.6 Domains of language use .....	134
5.3.6.1 Friendship domain .....	134
5.3.6.2 Technology and social networks .....	135
5.3.7 Motivation.....	136
5.3.8 Identity .....	137
5.3.9 Summary of chapter .....	140

<b>Chapter Six – Findings from Family Interviews.....</b>	<b>145</b>
6.1 Interviews with family members.....	145
6.2 Main themes .....	147
6.2.1 Italian language use and maintenance.....	147
6.2.2 Families’ attitudes to Italian language maintenance .....	156
6.3 Identity .....	158
6.4 Communities of practice .....	161
6.5 Contemporary affordances and hindrances of Italian language maintenance.....	162
6.6 Transmission of values and cultural values.....	164
6.7 Attitudes of the interviewed families to the educational sector offerings promoting Italian language maintenance.....	166
6.8 Summary of chapter .....	168
<b>Chapter Seven – Findings from Family Observations .....</b>	<b>170</b>
7.1 Family observations .....	170
7.1.1 Current language practices of Italian families in Sydney: family as community of practice.....	170
7.1.2 First, second and third generation everyday conversation in Family C.....	172
7.1.3 First and second generation language practices in Family A.....	180
7.1.4 First and second generation language practices in Family C.....	184
7.1.5 Parents-children language practices: language patterns in the three families .....	186
7.1.6 Language transmission strategies in Family B.....	202
7.2 Language learning through the domain of technology.....	203
7.3 Summary of chapter .....	204
<b>Chapter Eight – Discussion and Conclusion .....</b>	<b>206</b>
8.1 Introduction .....	206
8.2 Addressing the research questions .....	207
8.2.1 Differences in attitudes regarding Italian language loss and shift from first generation to later ones.....	207
8.2.2 Importance of Italian language maintenance and loss .....	208
8.2.3 Hindrances and affordances for later generations of Italian background families .....	209
8.2.3.1 Positions of Italo-Australians towards their <i>Italianness</i> .....	210
8.2.3.2 Importance of dialect .....	211
8.3 Future directions.....	211
8.4 Limitations .....	212
8.5 Contribution of the study.....	213
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>214</b>
Appendix 1: Grandparents stories and interviews.....	214
Appendix 2: Family C Observation (F_C_3).....	229
Appendix 3: Student survey .....	232
<b>List of References.....</b>	<b>236</b>

## **List of Figures**

Figure 3.1: Conceptual Framework .....	48
Figure 3.2: The iterative two-way process.....	70

## **List of Tables**

Table 2.1 Italian language speakers in Australia in various Australian censuses.....	16
Table 3.1: Data collection .....	71
Table 5.1: Profile Information of Participants .....	115
Table 5.2: Students' families Italian linguistic background .....	115
Table 5.3: Similarities between Standard Italian and dialect.....	117
Table 5.4: Sites of Students' Italian Learning .....	118
Table 5.5: Students' self-reported proficiency levels in Italian (N) .....	118
Table 5.6: Language and cultural values transmission .....	123
Table 5.7 Students' background .....	128
Table 6.1 Profile of the family members interviewed .....	145
Table 7.1: Transcription conventions .....	172



## Abstract

It is an established fact that there has been significant language shift in the second and third generations of Italians in Australia. Tracking this shift and using it as a context for analysing language maintenance (LM) among the current descendants of post-war migrants forms the main objective of this research.

This thesis seeks to develop an understanding of the range of language experiences among the broad Italian community in Sydney and also to map the effect of these experiences on the dispositions that they bring to the language maintenance project within extended families.

The research that forms the basis of this thesis was designed to shed light on modern-day situational realities among the communities of Italian language speakers in Sydney. The research investigated in depth what a particular group of *Italo*-Australians think of the affordances and hindrances for the maintenance of their home or heritage language. It was considered important to explore the ways in which attitudes inherited from previous generations or from the wider society have affected language maintenance among the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of those Italian migrants who came to Australia in the 1950s and 1960s. It was also considered essential to understand the ways in which these later generations negotiate their identity (-ies) within contemporary multicultural Australia.

The methodology employed for this study was case study with an ethnographic approach. This in-depth approach enabled an understanding of what Italian language maintenance means to the participants in the study and to their extended families. The conceptual framework of this research looks at the ways in which language maintenance is perceived by the Italian community through the lenses of identity, communities of practice and intergenerational practices. Multiple data sources included reference group discussions, survey and interviews to tertiary students, interviews with family members and family observations. The aim was to uncover silent opinions and overlooked individual searches for identity and positioning(s). Through this framework, this research successfully gained insights into the attitudes and dispositions of different generations of *Italo*-Australians towards their own language practices in the vibrant Italian speaking community on Sydney.